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The Musket

LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT-RUN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1969

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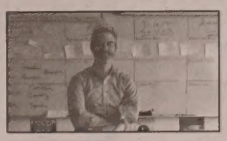
LHS performs its very own production of Legally Blonde



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History teacher Mr. Flynn discusses his music career

Volume LXI Issue V—March 2019

New courses will be available for the 2019-2020 school year

Pranathi Srirangam
Hannah Creighton
Haley Oh
Staff Writers

Lexington High School changes things up a little bit every year with new course offerings. The Musket looked into what's on the table for next year.

AP Computer Principles:

This course is meant to be an introduction to computer science and explores technological innovations and their impact on the world. Ideally, the course will be accessible to students without prior programming experience.

"We're targeting particularly juniors and seniors who haven't taken a computer science course… [They can] get an introduction before going off to college," Kelly Pendergast, a computer science teacher at LHS, said.

Students are expected to take the AP exam — but the exam is different than most.

"Your AP score is not just taking an exam at the end that determines your score; you take an exam but you also complete a project of your own choosing which counts towards it," Pendergast said.

Pendergast urges students to step out of their comfort zones and sign up.

"Don't be scared! You really don't have to know anything and you can take the course," Pendergast said.

French for Heritage Speakers:

The language department is adding French for Heritage Speakers.

"Students will continue to develop and improve their reading, writing and grammar skills for academic or standard French. Students will also continue to learn to appreciate the depth and diversity of Francophone countries around the world. This is really designed for kids who are able to talk in French with ease, total ease, but have trouble writing in French," Marianne Durand, a French teacher at LHS, said.

The course is available to students of all grades, according to Amy Moran, Head of the World Language Department.

"So this class will have students from all—freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and it's only the beginning, so it will be a mix," Amy Moran, Head of the World Language Department, said.

Current events will be a major focus.

"We will be working a lot on daily news and authentic documents to be really attached to what's going on," Durand said.

However, the course will not be a way to skip levels of French, or replace other language courses.

"We don't intend that class to be a foreign language class for kids, because it's not," Durand said. "So we do encourage them to continue a foreign language… We really want them to continue to open their world."

Honors Ceramics:

Taught by Ms. Patterson, a Visual Arts teacher, Honors Ceramics will be the third ceramics course offered at LHS. Advanced Ceramics is currently a semester class which allows students to "continue their personal exploration of clay by learning more experienced techniques of handbuilding, wheel working and glazing," according to the LHS Course Catalogue. The Honors Ceramics course is "focused on advanced wheelwork and experimental techniques," and will go further than Advanced Ceramics by having students "develop a body of work applying advanced ceramics techniques to a series of personal pieces," according to the 2019-2020 LHS Program of Studies.

Staff photo by Rebecca Kielar
One course on the table for next year is Honors Ceramics.

Should participation be a part of all grades?

Aditi Kalia
Meher Kaur Khanna
Staff Writers

This opinion piece does not reflect the position of the paper.

A contender for the most frustrating LHS experience: the effort/grade chasm. In other words, when the effort you feel you've put in never seems to manifest in high grades. For many of us, this is especially true when a few tests or papers are the sole factors in a final grade. Including a participation grade could reward students who work hard but struggle with the material or test poorly.

The first question: What is participation? And as a corollary, what does it mean to grade participation?

"Participation is showing your engagement, and how well you comprehend the information," Alyssa Zhang, a sophomore, said.

When we think of participation, we often picture speaking in class. But other indicators could also count towards a final grade.

"I think it encompasses, well, of course, your physical participation, like raising your hand and participating in discussions, but also how you show your engagement, by paying attention and how well you do your homework," Zhang said.

Effort is abstract, and in many ways immeasurable. It's hard to imagine an objective rubric for participation. Another concern is that participation grades could disadvantage timid students who work hard but aren't comfortable speaking in class, potentially because of language difficulties.

"It should be carried out with careful precision and a system that is as objective as possible, like for example, writing down commentary, collecting stuff in class, keeping track of quantity of moments in the whole class setting and in the small group setting [and] evaluation of homework," Patrick Flynn, an AP World History teacher, said.

For history and English classes that are heavy on discussion-based learning, participation is somewhat evident. But it's less clear what participation looks like in non-discussion classes.

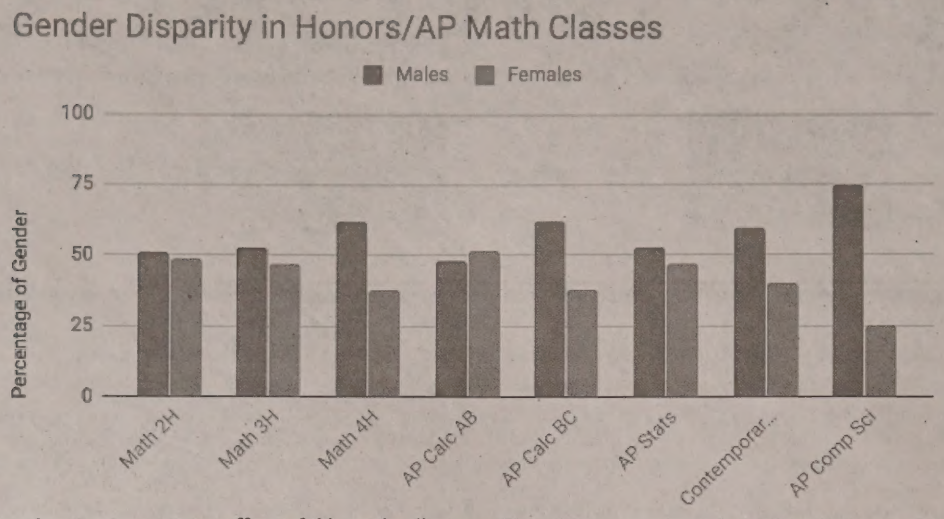
"[Most] of the STEM classes are lectures and more of the teacher talking and instructing and you just listen … Math and science have set information that you can't debate," Zhang said.

But even in those classes, grades for engagement—homework completion, attentiveness in class, collaborative work on labs or problem sets, et cetera—could provide a buffer for tests.

Another common argument is that participation doesn't model real life, namely college, where a couple of major papers and term tests determine grades. But real life is a terrible, infinitely regressive standard for secondary education. If we truly wish to make high school as "real world" as possible, we should make it as unfair, as brutal and as cutthroat as possible. There's a difference between modeling the real world and preparing students for it, and graded participation, by rewarding diligence and consistent engagement, prepares students to work hard holistically rather than cram for tests.

Participation isn't a cheap way to boost a grade, or too juvenile for high school. When every test seems to say, "No matter how hard you work, you're not smart enough," participation is a reason to push through.

STEM gender disparity exists, and worsens throughout high school



Data from Lexington Public Schools collected by The Musket indicate that the highest level math class in each grade is consistently male dominated. Information from the science department corroborates this trend, with Honors Earth Science, AP Chemistry, and AP Physics C all predominantly male. Interestingly, while the gender balance is roughly equal at the beginning of high school, a drop-off happens by senior year, which suggests that girls are pushed out over four years. While this is a nationally recognized trend, it's still upsetting to see happen at LHS.

Honors and AP teachers and students have observed that their classrooms follow this pattern.

"There's been about a two to one boys to girls and non binary students ratio in my AP Calculus classes," Allen Olsen, a math teacher, said.

This statistic is not just a number. Female and non-binary students feel the effects of this gender disparity in their day to day classroom experience.

"A lot of times in higher levels of math, there are very few girls and even when there are girls in the class, it's usually the guys that seem a lot smarter just because they talk more and participate more in class," Pia Jain, a sophomore, said.

The divide goes beyond Lexington High School, existing in camps and math competitions attended by LHS students.

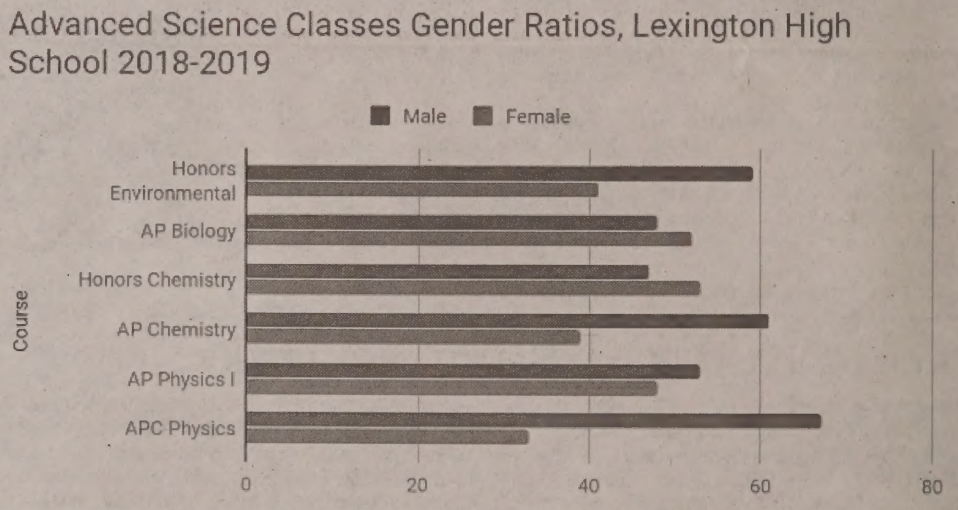
"I went to a math camp in 8th grade and for the first couple of days they evaluated us based [on] our skill and I think there were only one or two girls out of twelve people in the highest section," Matthew Berhe, a sophomore, said.

This phenomenon may make sense nationally, but in a suburb with the resources for and ideological commitment to gender equity, it's unclear why the STEM gender gap exists. Some math teachers noted that many female students, no matter how strong their grades were, showed uncertainty about taking higher level classes, and had to be pushed or coaxed. Conversely, male students were less likely to be unsure, or pushed more for higher level class placements. This suggests that teachers may have to take a more active role in positively reinforcing girls' success in STEM, or working on confidence.

"It's definitely a problem, and I feel like the only thing holding girls back are the teachers and parents who fail to recognize the problem," Janabel Xia, a junior who has participated in competitive math, said.

This gender disparity is reflected in the workforce as well. In a society where, according to the National Girls Collaborative Project, women comprise only 29% of all STEM field jobs, the need for female representation is dire.

"We need to show all individuals that their place is in the math classroom and that their contributions are valued," Mr. Olsen said.



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Spider-Man: Different Neighborhood, Still Friendly

Ria Bhandarkar
Opinions Editor

Everyone has a favorite cinematic Spider-Man, whether it's Tobey Maguire's emotional puppy-faced boy next door, Andrew Garfield's endearingly scruffy Peter Parker, or Tom Holland's too-cute-to-be-a-loser-but-we'll-suspend-our-disbelief awkward nerd. Some people even remember the Nicholas Hammond movies from the 1970s. Personally, I think the animated television series blows all other adaptations out of the water—it's where the theme song comes from!

Even though Spider-Man's wit and heroism have charmed audiences for decades, many of his fans have been suffering from adaptation fatigue. There have been three different Spider-Man franchises in the past two decades, and that's not even counting the various animated films that have come out during that time as well. To some, Spider-Man films have become too routine to be exciting.

However, recent Academy Award winner "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" is a new take that avoids the tired origin story tropes in every other Spider-Man film, even flipping some of them on their head.

The film follows Miles Morales, an Afro-Latino middle-schooler living in Brooklyn. He's an artist and is especially excited by graffiti, which creates tension between him and his police officer father. After getting bitten by a spider while playing with spray paint, Miles becomes another reincarnation of Spider-Man.

What sets this version apart from others is its meta self awareness: It acknowledges and incorporates the endless reimaginations of Spider-Man. A villain in Miles' timeline opens a portal to another universe, letting in various other versions of the superhero, including Spider-Gwen, an aging Peter B. Parker, Spider Noir and Spider-Ham. Each character is a hero in its own universe, and they all share similar, but not identical origin stories.

Although Miles is originally frustrated and unsure, his fellow Spider-People help him cope with his new responsibilities. Ultimately, the film suggests that anyone from anywhere can be a hero, whether they're a small pig, a little girl with a big robot or a creative boy whose family doesn't always admire his gifts. This message resonates deeply, especially because the film has the first depiction of Spider-Man as a person of color. Children from all backgrounds have been watching Spider-Man for years, but this is the first time he truly belongs to them.

A lot of moviegoers may believe that Hollywood is running out of original ideas and resorting to endless remakes and sequels. However, if more of these reboots are like Spider-Verse—playfully subversive with diverse takes on well-known stories—that might not be so bad.

Applying to college is rough but at least we have computers

Alexa Christ
Columnist

It's no secret that for seniors, college is on the brain. For our generation, however, technology has mitigated the the most difficult aspects of applying to college. In my parents' generation, applying to college was a wildly different experience.

In the 1980s, the process of getting into college wasn't online because—spoiler alert—the internet as we know it didn't exist yet. Students had to painstakingly fill out every application by hand or by typewriter, and mail each one out. They didn't have the beautiful "copy and paste" option, or even a backspace. However, they also didn't have the extra work that came with the incorporation of technology into the application process. There may have been one essay for a college. A SINGLE essay per school.

Also, in my parents' experience, almost no one from high school went to college out of state. Everyone they knew stayed in Michigan, close to home. There weren't many study abroad options for them, either. Nowadays, for a lot of kids it seems the further the college is from home, the better.

That being said, the cost of college was definitely cheaper back in the 80s. My dad even paid his own college tuition. You won't see me paying $30,000+ a year with my babysitting money.

But the benefits of technology and social media extend beyond application season. Now, with Snapchat, Instagram, Facetime and Skype, you can keep in touch with your high school friends. (Hopefully you don't stay Facebook friends with that one girl who you don't talk to anymore but who keeps sending you a request to join her detox tea pyramid scheme.) Before the internet, the main form of communicating with friends was writing letters. Actual snail mail letters. It was either that or using the landline in the hallway that everyone shared.

The landline was also one of the few ways to connect with home. Now, with the ease of texting, your parents can check up on you whenever they want. They can also track your Ubers. I found that out the hard way.

Looking at the stark differences between my parents' generation and mine, I wonder how drastically the college experience will change in the future.

Collegebored - Some advice for juniors

Jeffrey Gu
Columnist

Sorry, seniors; this one isn't for you :(

Juniors! It might seem a long way away, but senior fall is fast approaching, and in just a few months you'll be sending out your college applications.

Even though you probably shouldn't be jumping into constructing your resumes and writing up essays yet, there's a lot of things you can start thinking about now that will make your life a lot easier down the road.

For instance, what sort of college campus can you see yourself on? Large? Small? Close to home? As far away as possible? What sort of learning environment do you think is best for you? You've experienced what classes are like at Lexington High School –now you get the opportunity to reflect on what's worked and what hasn't, and choose what's right for you.

Perhaps even more importantly, what sort of community do you want to be a part of for the next four years? With all the focus we put on academics in high school, it can be easy to forget that eventually we'll move on from classes and textbooks and step into the real world. College is a major arbiter of that transition – outside the classroom, you'll be living independently and making your own decisions.

When you begin your college search, don't focus solely on schools' academic records. A ranking or an acceptance percentage won't give you anything other than anxiety. Look at the lifestyle each campus offers you. Will you live in the city? In a college town? What extracurriculars do you want to participate in? What sorts of people will you be around? Is the food on or around campus good? (Do they have boba nearby?)

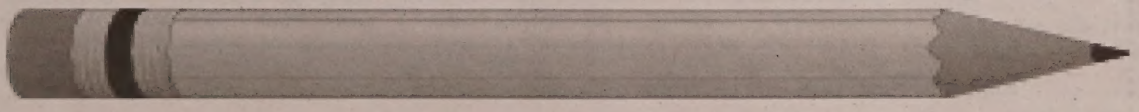
The answer to many of these questions can't be found by browsing a website – you'll have to travel around and experience each campus for yourself. Over the summer, or even during April break, you should take the time to visit the colleges you're most interested in, to sit in classes and talk with students, and to get a feel for the overall campus atmosphere. Even though the forms of the tours are often similar (cue holistic admissions spiel and reference to a capella), the vibes of different places vary widely.

And while you're planning your summer, it's not a bad idea to start looking over the Common App essay prompts, too. The essay writing process can be frustrating, and starting early can help reduce your workload once school starts back up in the fall.

That doesn't mean you should be spending your whole summer thinking about college – save plenty of time for kicking back and relaxing. Something as simple as jotting down interesting things that happen to you or making a note in the back of your head whenever something of significance occurs can help as you start brainstorming ideas for essays in the fall.

Lastly, remember that college applications are about you. They're not about the college listings on US News, Niche or Forbes. They're not about the places your parents want you to apply to. They're about finding the best fit for you, about finding a place that you can grow and thrive in for four years.

It may only be April, but the rest of your junior year will fly by. Before you know it, the class of 2019 will be gone, and you'll be the senior class. Enjoy the rest of your time as juniors while you can – in fewer than 14 months, you'll be out of here too, done with high school and moving on to new adventures.



Fox TV shows are declining in quality

Brendan Cantwell
Managing Editor

Over the years, Fox Entertainment Group has produced a diverse array of critically acclaimed television programs, including "New Girl," "Empire," "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" and "Lethal Weapon." Oh, wait. All of those have either been canceled or suffered major casting adjustments.

The most publicly decried of these cancellations came in May of 2018, when Fox made the surprising decision to cancel "Brooklyn Nine-Nine". The announcement sparked an outpouring of support from fans, including celebrities such as Lin-Manuel Miranda, Mark Hamill, Seth Meyers and Sean Astin. Luckily for these individuals and other diehard fans, "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" was picked up the next day by NBC.

Other programs have not been so lucky. In 2018,"New Girl" -Fox's highest rated comedy at the time - was renewed for only a short final seventh season. Although showrunners at least had the opportunity to wrap up the storyline, Fox shortchanged fans and lost a successful television show.

In addition to poor cancellation decisions, Fox shows are plagued by controversies surrounding their leading actors. The hit show "Empire" is struggling to recover from the loss of star Jussie Smollett following Smollett's bizarre, ongoing police scandal. And "Lethal Weapon," a program based on the film series of the same name, lost lead actor Clayne Crawford, who was fired allegedly for poor behavior on set. Crawford has said that his firing was a result of a bitter disagreement with co-star Damon Wayans, and that executives took Wayans's side. Crawford portrayed protagonist Martin Riggs, so the news of his dismissal caused debates as to whether "Lethal Weapon" could continue.

Fox opted to write Riggs out of the show, replacing him with Wesley Cole (Seann William Scott). However, Wayans announced that he too would be leaving the show after the third season for health reasons. The third season was extended by two episodes, which may seem like a win for the series, but it could also be a way to conveniently wrap up the plot before an inevitable cancellation, as the show will now be without its two original protagonists. "Lethal Weapon" is truly a show with great potential; it is unfortunate that it may end due to a dispute between actors and the inability of Fox executives to adequately respond.

However, the most disappointing aspect of Fox's television programming is its distinct lack of foxes, which is one of the biggest false advertising scams of the century. Indeed, the one redeeming quality of Fox Entertainment Group is that its subsidiary 20th Century Fox was the distributor behind the Academy Award-nominated 2009 film "Fantastic Mr. Fox." Stick to foxes, Fox.

Mr. Flynn: Teacher by day, punk rock star by night

Athena Li
Ilana Rosker
Staff Writers

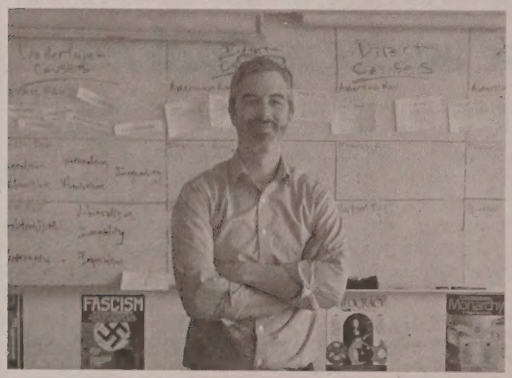
Many of our teachers have side hustles, but only a few moonlight as rockstars.

When Flynn is not teaching AP World History at Lexington High School, he is invested in his musical career. He has been the lead singer in a number of groups, including Clear, Sweet Jesus and Fiddlehead, and most notably Have Heart, a straight-edge punk band with whom he performs during school breaks and tours with frequently, now under the band name FREE.

"Not that I was a misfit with anything—I did get along with people, but it was tough always being the new kid. It was frustrating in my childhood and early adolescence, and the sound of punk rock music was really appealing to me," Flynn said.

Raised in a military family, Flynn's upbringing was at odds with traditional punk rock.

"At the same time, I was also the son of a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Army, which meant I had to have a very disciplined, and straight and narrow lifestyle. So, what I was most attracted to was this part of the punk-rock scene called straight-edge," Flynn said.



Staff photo by Talia Blatt
Patrick Flynn is a world history teacher and vocalist.

Straight edge emerged in the early 1980s as a response to mainstream punk culture, which centered partying, rebellion for the sake of rebellion, and most of all, the use of addictive substances.

"Straight-edge played punk rock music, but simultaneously promoted this drug and alcohol-free lifestyle. This subset of music, hardcore rock music, it took music seriously—it wasn't just about living this chaotic lifestyle, but instead being an independent person," Flynn said.

Flynn was also drawn to the large community the genre provided.

"It was very unexpected to find out that this genre of music was shared globally. I would have never guessed, as a 14-year-old living in Massachusetts, that this music was shared in Beijing, or in Johannesburg, both of which I eventually played in," Flynn said.

As he became more successful, Flynn immersed himself in his surprising international coterie.

"This interconnected element of this subculture made traveling quite easy because it was almost like a global clique. A global group of people who wanted to support each other, and learn from one another. I would book shows from bands in St. Paolo, Brazil, and people from St. Paolo would book shows from my band," Flynn said.

Despite all of his worldly adventures and accolades, Flynn concludes that his proudest achievement was actually the decision to leave show business.

"It's very easy to get caught up in all the celebrity lifestyle there. But [we made] the decision to not continue being in the spotlight, passing the torch to the next generation of straight edge bands," Flynn said.

The hardcore scene facilitated Flynn's transition to a new chapter in his life.

"Looking back on that, I am proud of it—some bands from my time stuck around too long, and to me the really great thing about the punk rock hardcore scene was that it promoted a constant evolution of the self. Taking from that lesson, I wanted to experience a life that was not just playing shows, but instead one that acknowledged the fact that life is long, life is big and what you put into it is what you get out of it," Flynn said.

Flynn feels his tenure as a punk rocker enhances his ability to teach high schoolers broad historical concepts and values, particularly about our path towards democracy.

"The punk rock and hardcore word is very much predicated on the idea of democracy. When you go to a punk rock show, there is no barrier between the audience and the performers. For me, this is an implicit metaphor for the concept of democracy and representation—you have the full opportunity to be represented. It's an empowering experience."

This is our second-to-last issue, which means we're almost done *wipes tears* .

Next issue will have our formal goodbyes, but until then, turn on some 2000s bops, enjoy some warm weather (or at least weather that's above freezing), and check out our website:

https://musketnews2.wixsite.com/lexmusket. We're in the home stretch, so hang in there!

Best,
Talia and Rebecca

Students fare well in science fair

Victoria Yuan
Sarah Liu
Staff Writers

This year, students presented more than 30 projects in the preliminary competition of the Massachusetts Science and Engineering Fair at Lexington High School on Feb. 13. Experiments came from a broad range of scientific fields: Some students tested the correlation between brain activity and deception, others aimed to find novel solutions to eutrophication; an oxygen depletion crisis linked to overuse of fertilizers.

The Massachusetts Science and Engineering Fair is a competition in which students are encouraged to research a topic of their choice and perform an experiment, analyze data, or engineer a product that solves a real-world issue.

"It was interesting to see all the ideas people came up with," Vidushi Meel, a freshman who participated in the science fair, said. "Presenting to the judges was a new experience. This process has helped me gain confidence in speaking with professionals."

For Caroline Li, a junior who took part in the 2017 Lexington High School Science Fair, flexibility was another challenge.

"I think one of the most important lessons I learned from doing the science fair was about adapting as our experiment changed. We were doing a project on skyglow, but on some of the few nights we were able to get together and take pictures, we had everything from snow on the ground to clouds that really shifted our data curve a lot between trials. We ended up incorporating those errors into our analysis, analyzing not just skyglow between different locations but also under different conditions," Li said of her project, which was an analysis of light pollution.

The fair breaks away from socioeconomic and gender norms that surround the STEM field: 40% of total participants in the statewide competition attend high-needs schools, and more than half of the students that participate in the fair are women.

Kara Luo, an LHS alum who is currently majoring in computer science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, reflected on her high school science fair experiences.

"The science fair gave me a great opportunity to work on projects that I was interested in. It pushed me to explore topics that I may not have given more thought to otherwise, and to really research them in a methodical and scientific manner. I think that it gave me a first taste of what research and engineering is, and sparked my interest in pursuing STEM further in college," Luo said.

The students from LHS who qualified for the regional fair attended the region IV Massachusetts Science Fair on March 9. The top scorers at this competition will advance to the Massachusetts State Fair this May.

Staff photo by Brittany Lin
Science fair participants Vidushi Meel and Asritha Bodepudi pose in their lab coats.

Physical education department scores a win for the next school year

Victoria Yuan
Sarah Liu
Staff Writers

Wish badminton had lasted longer? You're in luck.

As part of the schedule changes taking place next year at Lexington High School, physical education classes will be offered on a semester basis instead of the current quarterly basis.

Staff photo by Olivia Hoover
Students warm up and wait for their gym class to begin.

"I believe the change will benefit students first, and by that I mean there will be less schedule changes -down from four times a year to two times a year. There will be less of an impact on the attendance around missed physical education classes and more time for exposure to the instruction of the physical education course because it is longer in duration. As a result, counselors will not have to field as many requests and questions during the school year, allowing more time to be available to students for other issues," Stephanie Michael, a guidance counselor at LHS, said.

Currently, physical education teachers have approximately 250 students per quarter. For each student, they must keep track of grading and any personal accommodations, such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and medical alerts.

"I believe this new model will be of great benefit for our student population offering what we believe is one of the most diverse programs of study in any physical education program while also strengthening the student-teacher relationship in the process," Eamonn Sheehan, LHS Physical Education Coordinator, said.

One drawback to this new course system is relevant to students who don't have a whole number of semesters of required physical education classes left. 6 physical education credits are required to graduate. A quarter's worth of physical education is 0.5 credits. Under the new system, students who have an odd number of quarters left will be forced to take an extra quarter of physical education instead of another elective or free period. This drawback will not affect incoming classes.

"No worries. Hope it all goes well," Julie Fenn, a physical education coordinator, said.

Sandra Pike prepares students in the special education program

Emily Ma
Staff Writer

Lexington High School is renowned for its excellent special education program. The special education staff plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of each student.

Sandra Pike has been an instructional assistant at LHS since 2010. She works with disabled students who have been assigned an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

"I previously worked in an elementary school, but wanted to work with students in a small setting and be more helpful not only in special education but in the classroom as a whole," Pike said.

Pike hopes to aid students in all facets of their lives.

"[I want] to really help students in every aspect of their day, whether it's academically, socially or emotionally. Special education is a whole team that makes all the pieces of a student to be successful in life, as we can teach them the tools, but they can forever use them," Pike said.

Special educators have the opportunity to form close ties with their students.

"You do work with them so closely and get to spend time with them in and outside the classrooms. Also, any day you make a difference, even the slightest, it's so rewarding," Pike said.

A common challenge in this field is balancing independence and support, so that students can grow under conditions best suited to their needs.

"[We] need to advocate and make sure every student's well-being is met, but sometimes [we] hit bumps in the roads," Pike said.

Pike maintains an optimistic view on the future of special education. She recognizes that the relationship between educators and their students is one of a kind, and has learned as much from them as she hopes they have learned from her.

"I hope that every student leaves LHS knowing that high school was a good experience—that they grew, and that [educators] also grow and learn from all our students to make this a program that will continue to be successful," Pike said.

In her free time, Pike loves to boat with her family, play golf and read.

Artist of the Issue: Efrat shows us her passion for photography

Christina Li
Daisy Li
Staff Writers

For anyone walking through the front entrance of Lexington High School, "The Big Striptease" is unmissable. Showcased in the walk-in gallery, huge dark sheets of fabric and glossy prints show striking photos of senior and photographer Danielle Efrat's face and body. "The Big Striptease" is part of a project in Efrat's Senior Portfolio and Women in Literature classes, inspired by Sylvia Plath's poem "Lady Lazarus." In the poem, Plath discusses her mental health, inviting the audience to view her vulnerability as a spectacle.

Efrat started pursuing photography seriously the summer after her sophomore year, when she spent three weeks at Pratt Institute's Pre-College program, focusing on digital photography. Following the program, Efrat was inspired to further develop her portfolio and create a website and photography Instagram account.

During a unit about female madness in Efrat's Women in Literature class, students discussed concepts such as the male gaze and the policing of female bodies.

"One of my goals with 'The Big Striptease' was to challenge how far I'm willing to go as a woman and be vulnerable in front of the entire school. It definitely wasn't easy to present myself in such a way when I don't like how I look in the pictures, but that's exactly why I kept going," Efrat said.

For Efrat, photography holds value beyond pure aesthetics.

"[Photography] added meaning to my life, gave me something to pursue and constantly try to be better at. Photography's taught me to appreciate the beauty in the world around me. I learned to look at my surroundings and the people around me differently, and I am constantly learning and finding new ways to truly capture the essence of the subject," Efrat said.

Efrat also admires photography's role in storytelling.

"Photography can reveal what's hiding behind the surface and present raw emotions… Stories are so important to us as a society. We are constantly trying to empathize with one another, and photography allows us to connect in a [new] way, beyond the written word," Efrat said.

Staff photos by Matt Pearlman
Pictured above is senior and local photographer Danielle Efrat.

Bend and snap! LHS performs "Legally Blonde"

Maia Hahn-Du Pont
Jake Fernandes
Staff Writers

Omigod oh my god you guys, "Legally Blonde—The Musical" is coming to Lexington High School.

Sophomore Daria Radulescu-Banu will star as Elle Woods, a ditsy albeit determined woman who applies to Harvard Law School to chase her ex-boyfriend, Warner Huntington III (junior Harris Erdman).

Instead of winning back her boyfriend, she ends up winning a murder trial. In court, she defends Brooke Wyndham (senior Sarah Zola), a fitness celebrity accused of killing her husband. Along the way, Elle gains moral and legal support from her friend and eventual love interest Emmett Forrest (junior Isaac Mukamal).

"Seeing ["Legally Blonde"] produced here, and by members of our community, seems like a really interesting and fun opportunity," Prakshi Khare, a freshman, said.

The cast began rehearsals Monday, Feb. 11.

Sophomore Aidan Kelly will play a myriad of roles: a waiter, a JetBlue pilot, a Harvard student, a prison guard and a salon customer.

"[I'm] looking forward to seeing how [the cast] will work together as a community and we'll [become] even better friends," Kelly said.

"Legally Blonde" differs in tone from the past few LHS musicals, including "Pippin" and "Into the Woods."

"Where 'Pippin' was somewhat ominous at times, 'Legally Blonde' is jazzy, exciting, and happy," Kelly said.

"Legally Blonde" will be directed by Kate Bromley, Jason Iannuzzi and John DiPerna. Anne Carey will manage costumes and choreography. Tickets go on sale close to the show dates, which are May 2, 3 and 4.

Photo courtesy of Kelly Hui
LHS students put on their own production of Legally Blonde.

"The Bachelor" might be over, but I'm not over the fence jump

Clare Wiesen
News Editor

On Mar. 4, 2019, Bachelor Nation finally got what it was waiting for all season: Colton gracefully jumping over a fence and running into the Portuguese countryside. With all of the anticipation surrounding the jump, I was afraid that it wouldn't live up to the hype. But Colton and Chris Harrison did not disappoint.

The jump came at the end of an episode that might actually be "unlike anything we've seen before," as Chris Harrison says about every episode. It started out tame: Colton and Tayshia had their date in Portugal, during which they went skydiving and, of course, didn't eat the food on the plates in front of them. It started to heat up as the night went on, as audiences waited to see what would happen, or really what wouldn't happen, in the fantasy suite.

The conversation between Colton and Tayshia the morning after their night in the fantasy suite was awkward at best. Clearly, nothing had happened between them; the world, along with Tayshia, was disappointed that Colton still had his flower. In my opinion, although it was fairly obvious that Colton wasn't going to lose his virginity to Tayshia just because she got the first date, it was still a letdown.

The real drama started with Cassie's date. Her dad's arrival in Portugal was dramatic, but not uncommon on "The Bachelor", so it didn't strike me as a big deal. The real tea was poured when Cassie showed up for the evening portion of her date and decided that she needed to leave, even after Colton told her that he was in love with her and didn't feel the same for the two remaining women. We've had bachelors tell more than one woman that he was in love with them, but never before have we seen a bachelor throw the other two women to the curb in an episode that wasn't even the finale.

It was predictable when, in the finale, Colton sent Tayshia and Hannah G. packing and went off to beg Cassie to take him back, because it was basically his only option. It wouldn't have looked good if the titular Bachelor was left single at the end, and he couldn't pick Tayshia or Hannah after he publicly said he wasn't in love with them. I liked Cassie from the beginning, so I'm happy that they are together for now, but I'm not confident that their relationship will end in marriage.

The other new tea is that Hannah B., also known as Miss Alabama USA 2018, is going to be the next Bachelorette. This comes as a shock, as Hannah was cut before the Hometown Dates, and the Bachelorette is typically someone who made it at least into the top four. Hannah is also a strange pick because in the feud between her and Caelynn, the majority of Bachelor Nation supported Caelynn.

When it comes down to it, Hannah B. makes sense because "The Bachelorette" is boring when the Bachelorette herself is boring. In my opinion, the men on "The Bachelorette" create less drama than the women do on "The Bachelor", so the show can turn up dry when there is a more reserved Bachelorette (Exhibit A: Becca from last season).

Hannah B. might not have been the most obvious choice, but I think she will be the most entertaining. She probably won't jump a gate, run off into the Portuguese countryside, disappear, come back, send the last two guys home and then show up at somebody's house, begging him to take her back, but I have a feeling that she will bring her own, new drama.

2000s BOPS! Listen to these for some sick throwback beats

Party in the USA — Miley Cyrus
Hey Ya! — OutKast
Replay — Iyaz
Pon de Replay — Rihanna
Yeah! — Usher
Single Ladies — Beyonce
Poker Face — Lady Gaga
So What — P!nk
Everytime We Touch — Cascada
It Wasn't Me — Shaggy
Hollaback Girl — Gwen Stefani
Telephone — Beyonce and Lady Gaga
Milkshake — Kelis
Hips Don't Lie — Shakira
You Belong With Me — Taylor Swift
Without Me — Eminem
Umbrella — Rihanna
Low — Flo Rida
Crank That — Soulja Boy
Toxic — Ke$ha
Born This Way — Lady Gaga

Before He Cheats — Carrie Underwood
Put Your Records On — Corinne Bailey Rae
Bad Romance — Lady Gaga
Tik Tok — Ke$ha
Burn It Up — Jonas Brothers
Girlfriend — Avril Lavigne
Oops! I Did it Again — Britney Spears
Fergalicious — Fergie
Mr. Brightside — The Killers
I Gotta Feeling — The Black Eyed Peas
Bye Bye Bye — NSYNC
Love Story — Taylor Swift
Drop It Like It's Hot — Snoop Dogg ft. Pharrell Williams
Work It — Missy Elliott
International Love — Pitbull
Gold Digger — Kanye West
Hot in Herre — Nelly
I Kissed A Girl — Katy Perry
I Write Sins Not Tragedies — Panic! At The Disco

10 Things NO ONE tells you about high school

1) Life doesn't stop moving

2) Things that matter a lot today might not matter as much tomorrow or next Tuesday.

3) Don't model your life after anybody else. You will never be exactly like them, and that's a good thing.

4) Things rarely work out the way you think they will, but they'll probably work out okay.

5) Almost everybody (friends, teachers, parents) is more understanding than you'll think they'll be.

6) Don't do classes or extracurriculars just to put them on your college apps --you'll regret it when you're an upperclassman.

7) As a corollary to point six, if you do things you actually like, you'll work harder and do better.

8) If your gut says don't do it, then don't do it.

9) People come into and out of your life. Friend groups will change! A lot! And it'll be okay!

10) The cafeteria runs out of ciabatta sometimes, but marbled rye is almost as good.

Athletes of the Issue

Keeping pace with Kazu Uda-Thach

Bryant Xia
Samiha Kazi
Staff Writers

Senior captain Kazu Uda-Thach is in his fourth and final season as a high school track athlete. He recently placed fourth in the indoor championship and third in the outdoor championship on a sprint medley team at the All-American nationals hosted by New Balance.

Uda-Thach began track in middle school. He made the varsity team his freshman year.

"I was always thrown in with the upperclassmen during workouts and meets," Uda-Thach said. "I started to get more into the sport by learning [from] professional athletes and working on technique and lifting."

Uda-Thach trained with Lexington High School alum Noah Shute and sprinting coach Lisa Cox.

"[Cox] has helped me through many things on and off the track, which is why I still strive to become a better runner every day," Uda-Thach said.

Injuries have posed intermittent setbacks.

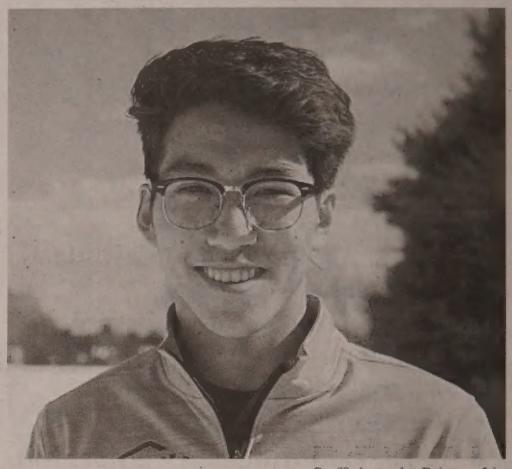
"I was always able to recover quickly and bounce back from them and come back stronger than ever, hitting a season-best each time," Uda-Thach said.

This past year, coaches awarded Uda-Thach with the role of captain for both the indoor and outdoor track teams.

"[I was] the quiet guy who... sat back and let others speak out," Uda-Thach said.

He has committed to the University of Massachusetts Lowell to run track for the next four years.

"I look [forward] to competing in the NCAA National Championship and hopefully setting some school records and writing one for the books," Uda-Thach said.



Staff photos by Brittany Lin
Pictured above is Kazu Uda-Thach, senior and varsity track athlete.

Don't get in Michael Gupta's way -- he throws hammers

Vibhuti Naik
Rachel Zhang
Staff Writers

Michael Gupta's got a hammer -- or at least a metal ball attached to a wire.

As a member of Lexington High School's track and field team, Gupta, a junior, competes in hammer throwing. A relatively less well known track and field event, hammer throwing involves throwing a twelve pound ball as far as possible out of a circle six feet in diameter.

Gupta's hammer throwing journey began May of sophomore year, when throwing coach James Hall introduced him to the event. Gupta soon decided to commit.

For Gupta, hammer throwing requires a level of technicality that distinguishes it from other track and field events.

"Every element of the throw must be micro-analyzed and corrected, from angles of the hammer at every turn, to footwork timing down to the tenth or hundredth of a second, to hip positioning at every moment in order to maximize distance," Gupta said.

Gupta's personal record in hammer throwing is 185 feet. In weight throw, a similar indoor track event that involves throwing a 25 pound ball, Gupta is ranked 30th in the country and 7th in New England.

In the future, Gupta hopes to compete in hammer throwing at a Division 1 college. He also wants to become an Academic All-American, which is a national honor that recognizes student-athletes who maintain high grades and athletic success. To qualify, students need at least a 3.6 grade point average on a 4.0 scale, and they must be a state tournament place-winner or an all-state qualifier.

"I have all the resources to [meet my goals], including a great coach and support system around me, so it's up to me to put in the work and execute," Gupta said.

Staff photos by Shweta Kondapi
Varsity track athlete Michael Gupta poses with his track equipment.

Sophia Lehrer: 1 Gravity: 0

Ashna Mitta
Staff Writer

It takes a lot to bend Sophia Lehrer out of shape.

A junior at Lexington High School, Lehrer is a nationally ranked, gold medalist winning gymnast. She started when she was just two years old.

"I do it every day, it's super time consuming and a lot of work on my body, but I love it and it's helped me become very disciplined," Lehrer said.

When she was younger, her role models were Olympians Aly Raisman and Simone Biles.

"[My role models] used to be all the Olympians but now I think my teammates [are] because they push me to do better," Lehrer said.

It hasn't always been smooth sailing for Lehrer.

"A couple of weeks ago, I broke my toe right in the middle of a competition and I still won. I didn't give up and I was super proud of that moment," Lehrer said.

In order to perform well at regional and national competitions, Lehrer follows a strict daily regimen and sets constant goals for herself. Lehrer won the state championship in 2018 and is ranked in the top 20 nationally on the vault, with a score of 9.6 out of 10.

"Gymnastics is scary sometimes, but you really have to push yourself. I've wanted to quit before when it got hard, but I kept going and I'm happy that I did. It is such a big part of who I am now," Lehrer said.

Staff photos by Vighnesh Nagpal
Pictured above is Sophia Lehrer, junior and nationally ranked gymnast.